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ABSTRACT

The 1988-89 study reported in this paper focused on teacher attrition, examining the characteristics of beginning teachers in North Dakota. The purpose was to compare characteristics of those teachers who stayed in their first positions with those who left. The study gathered data by surveying school administrators and elementary and secondary teachers, primarily those who stayed in their positions. The data suggests that 22.4% of North Dakota's new teachers leave their first teaching jobs after only one year. A majority of teachers who leave their first jobs accept teaching positions elsewhere, usually in larger communities. Teacher characteristics associated with high attrition included: (1) not being certified in a portion of the teaching assignment; (2) beginning by working in a small community; (3) beginning a career in the northwestern part of the state; (4) being new to the community; and (5) being a specialist. Teachers who left their first jobs were likely to be among the more effective teachers, and were unlikely to be recipients of appropriate staff development. Teachers who reported dissatisfaction did not necessarily leave their positions. The paper concludes that support is needed for new teachers in North Dakota and for the schools that receive them. Recommendations for reducing the attrition rate include building-level orientation, fair assignment practices, provision of housing, "home base" schools for specialists, outreach to new teachers on the part of professional networks, and, perhaps most critically, staff development. The appendix contains the two survey questionnaires. (TES)

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First Year Teachers in North Dakota

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First Year Teachers in North Dakota

The ability of the United States to maintain and improve the education offered to children and young people is tied to the recruitment and development of excellent teachers. This recognition has led, in the last few years, to national focus on the problem of teacher attrition, which is especially dramatic in the early years of a teaching career. Fifteen percent of new teachers do not survive their first year in the classroom; 15 percent more leave during or after their second year; and 50 percent leave teaching within the first five years in a profession that has an overall annual turnover rate of 6 percent (Huling-Austin, 1986). Early defectors tend to include the most academically talented people to enter teaching (Rosenholtz, 1987). Reasons for early teacher attrition are undoubtedly complex, including such factors as faulty identification of teacher candidates, lack of support for new teachers, and inadequate recognition of the amount of time and resources required to enable a person to learn to teach well.

Within this complex picture, the element which has become the focal point for national action is support of beginning teachers. By 1987, eleven states were implementing, six piloting, and fifteen planning teacher induction programs (Hawk and Robards, 1987). Standards of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education implemented in 1988 included follow-up of graduates into their first year of teaching. Many local school districts, institutions of higher education, and regional

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*This study was made possible through a grant from the Bush Foundation of St. Paul, MN. Data were collected by Lori Dossett, Center for Teaching and Learning; entered by Kathy Mattson, UND Computer Center; and analyzed with programming assistance from Bob Harris, UND Department of Mathematics Consulting Center, and Mark Steen, Center for Teaching and Learning.

service agencies are actively developing support programs for new teachers. Not surprisingly, induction program development has been most intense in parts of the country where population is increasing. Teachers in the frostbelt, and especially in rural locations in the frostbelt, have not been touched by such activities.

The purpose of this study, undertaken in the 1988-89 academic year, was to learn more about the situation of beginning teachers in North Dakota in ways that could inform development of assistance programs and to identify elements of the beginning teaching situation most likely to accompany teacher attrition. This paper describes briefly the methods used in collecting and analyzing the data and reports demographic characteristics of the beginning teacher population in North Dakota. The paper goes on to state findings about teacher attrition and to make recommendations for teacher assistance and development.

Methodology

Subjects for the study were 1,183 teachers who began their careers in North Dakota in the 1984-85, 1985-86, and 1986-87 academic years. Numbers of new teachers in the state declined across the years in question from 510 to 357 to 316 in 1986-87. Of this group, we eventually collected data from 391, 33 percent. Because this is not an especially impressive rate of return, it is important to consider whether persons who did not respond might differ in important ways from those who did. Survey instruments were sent on two occasions to the teachers, whose names were secured from the Department of Public Instruction, at school addresses. Trying to contact by telephone a random sample of 50 nonrespondents, we learned that schools often had not forwarded our first class mailed questionnaires even when addresses of departed teachers were known. Nonrespondents still teaching in

schools where they began their careers most frequently told us they had not responded to our survey because they were too busy or because they thought it was for new teachers. School personnel were sometimes able to give us addresses for the 32 departed teachers, and we tried by telephone to persuade those in our nonrespondent sample to return their questionnaires; 16 did. Figure 1 presents a composite of our sample of 50 with reasons they did not respond to our questionnaire.

Figure 1

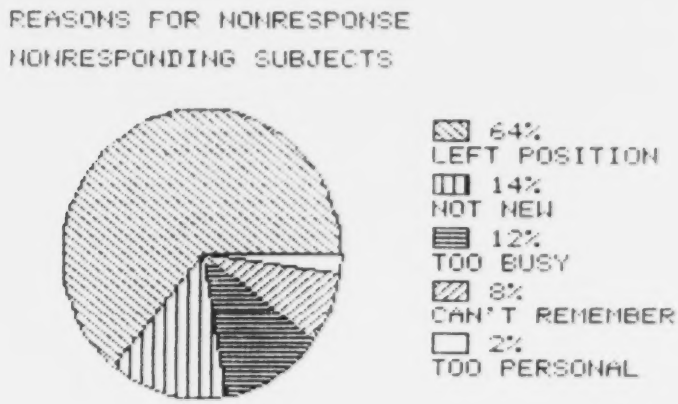


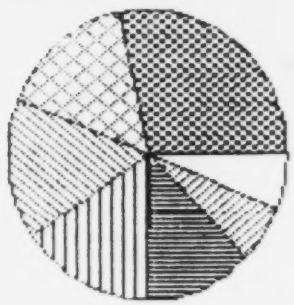
Figure 2 presents additional information about reasons for the departures of the 32 nonrespondents who had left their first positions. Since these persons had not received our questionnaires, these are reasons for departures given by school personnel.

Comparing the data presented in Figures 1 and 2 to information about our sample of 391 subjects reported in the next section suggests that the sample overrepresents teachers who stayed in teaching, whether in their first positions or in locations to which they moved. Thus, we depend more on principal than on teacher data for authoritative statistics on attrition.

Figure 2

REASONS FOR LEAVING

NONRESPONDENTS WHO LEFT



28.11% TEACH ELSEWHERE

15.63% OUTSIDE EDUC

15.63% UNKNOWN

15.63% MOVED W/SPOUSE

12.50% RIF

6.25% PROBLEMS TEACH

6.25% IN COLLEGE

In addition to teachers, North Dakota principals were surveyed about their perceptions of new teachers. Two mailings to principals resulted in 494 respondents, a 87 percent rate of return.

Copies of the questionnaires administered to teachers and principals appear in Appendices A and B. Data analysis was computer assisted and employed a variety of descriptive techniques. The report that follows indicates techniques used and levels of significance as appropriate.

Description of Beginning Teachers

Our sample of persons who began their teaching careers in North Dakota between 1984 and 1987 included 164 elementary teachers (42%), 167 secondary teachers (43%), and 61 specialists in fields such as music, physical education, art, and special education (15%). The number of beginning elementary teachers increased at each grade level from grade 1 through grade 6. New secondary teachers typically taught 5 subjects with 6 different preparations. (In this analysis algebra, general mathematics, geometry, and

calculus are considered different subjects, while seventh grade and eighth grade English are different preparations.) The most likely subjects to be taught were, in order of decreasing frequency: general mathematics, English, history, social studies, life science, earth science, computers, biology, government, algebra, and business. Table 1 shows the number of secondary respondents who taught each of a variety of subjects and whether that subject was considered their first, second, third, etc., subject. Subjects mentioned by fewer than five teachers do not appear on the table but included law, journalism, world geography, economics, fine arts, marketing, religion, college preparatory math, spelling, and others.

TABLE 1
Number of Secondary Respondents Who
Taught Subjects with Ordering of Subjects

Subject	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Six	Seventh-Twelfth	Total
General Math	7	9	5	5	1	1	4	32
English	30							30
History	21	2	3		1			27
Social Studies	2	4	8	7	1		4	26
Earth Science		4	7	8	1	2		22
Computers	8	5	2	3	2		2	22
Business	6	9	3		2		1	21
Biology	4	14	2	1				21
Government	1	14	2	1	1	1	1	21
Algebra	15	4	2					21
Chemistry	18	2						20
General Science		3	4	5	4	2	1	19
Physical Ed.	2	5	1	3	2	4	2	19
Literature		17						17
Geometry	3	7	3	1				14
Home Economics	8			1	1		2	12
Health	3		1		1	3	2	10
Speech	2	1	1	5				9
Vocational Ag.	8							8
Drama	1		7					8
Physics	4	3						7
Foreign Language	6	1						7
Industrial Arts	4	1	1					6
Psychology			1	2	1	2		6
Physical Science				3	2		1	6
Vocal Music	3		1	1				5

More than two thirds (69%) of the beginning teachers were female; 96 percent were white. The sample included 11 Native American, 2 black, and 2 Hispanic teachers. A majority of the new teachers, 64%, were of traditional age (22-23) during their first year of teaching; 87% were less than 30, and the oldest was 52. Figure 3 shows the distribution of ages of the subjects. Forty-five percent of the teachers began their careers in communities smaller than 1,000 people; and 72% began their careers in communities smaller than 10,000. The distribution of new teachers by community size is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 3

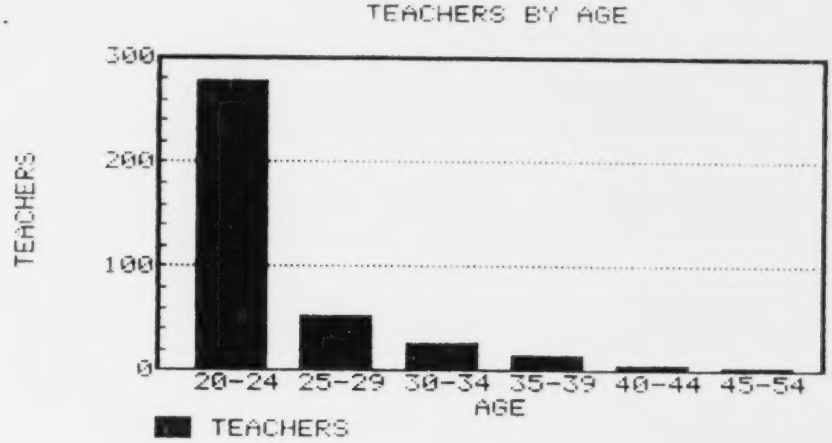
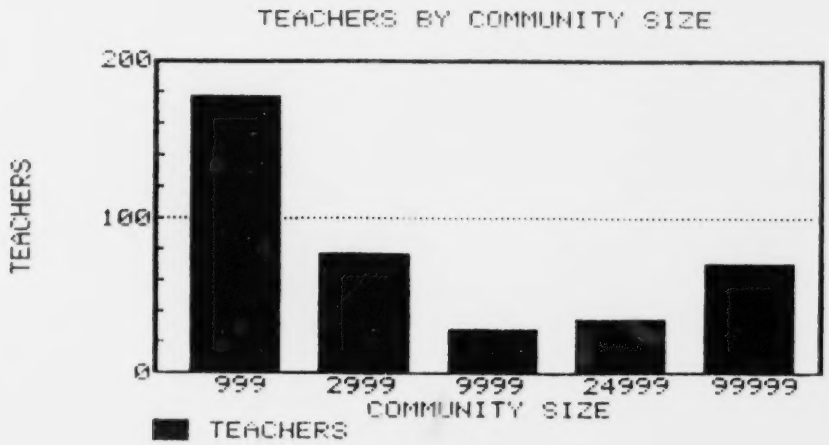
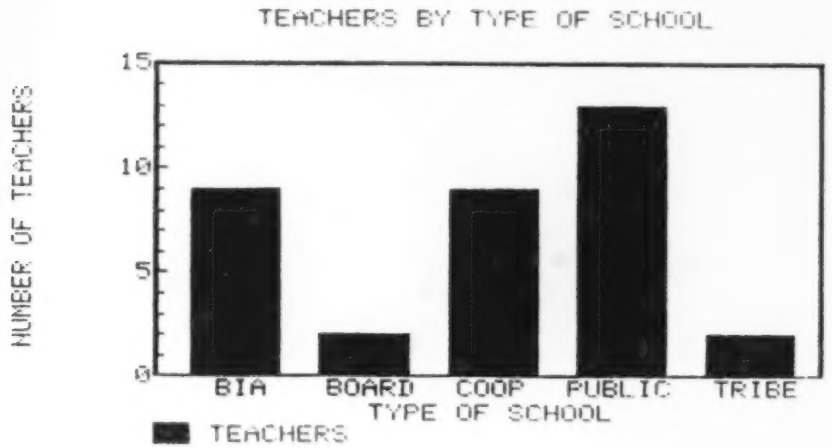


Figure 4



Almost 12% (35 teachers) began their careers on Indian reservations, a majority of these in public, BIA, or cooperatively administered schools. Figure 5 shows the distribution of new teachers teaching on Indian reservations by type of school.

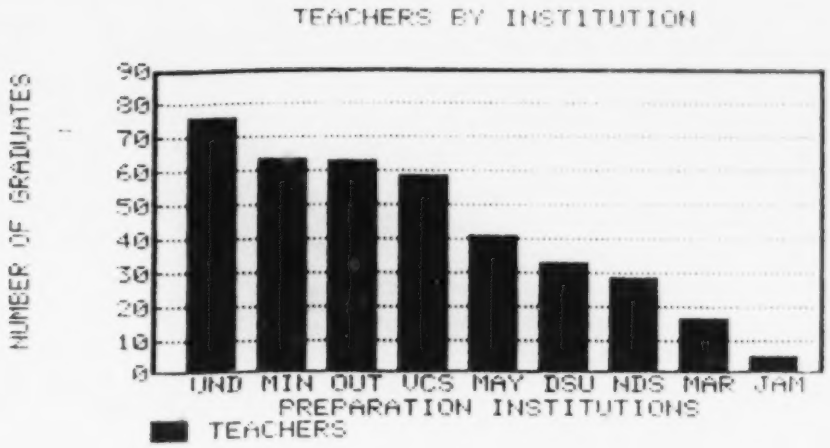
Figure 5



The new teacher sample included graduates of all but one teacher education institution in the state and 63 (16%) teachers prepared out of state. Ten percent of the teachers had university work beyond the bachelor's level. Figure 6 shows the distribution of new teachers by teacher education institution.

One portion of our analysis compared principal assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of beginning teachers to the strengths and weaknesses perceived by the beginners themselves. There is considerable agreement between the two groups. Responding in an open-ended format, principals perceived the major strengths of beginning teachers to be energy and enthusiasm (70%); preparation in modern pedagogy (27%); and willingness to learn (23%). Among new teachers, frequently mentioned first-year

Figure 6



strengths were youth and enthusiasm (22%), rapport with students (14%), and disposition to become a teacher (12%). Principals cited as weaknesses of beginning teachers discipline and classroom management (41%); lack of confidence and experience (31%); and lack of knowledge of school procedures (17%). More secondary than elementary principals perceived discipline and classroom management as a weakness, and more elementary principals perceived lack of knowledge of school procedures to be a problem. Almost a third of the new teachers felt that their biggest weakness was in discipline. Organization, time management, and planning were mentioned as weaknesses by 18 percent, and lack of knowledge of a content area taught by 13 percent of beginning teachers.

Since the focus of this study was teacher attrition, a major purpose of the analysis was to distinguish teachers who stayed in their first positions from those who left. Principal data suggests that 22.4 percent of new teachers in North Dakota leave their first teaching jobs after only one

year, a statistic higher than the national average. In the teacher sample, 30.4 percent reported having left their first teaching positions, but these departures could have occurred over several years for some subjects. Nevertheless, because of characteristics of the sample, this is believed to be an underestimate of the number of North Dakota teachers who had left their first positions over the several years available to some subjects. The most likely to leave of new North Dakota teachers are the specialists, only 40 percent of whom reported that they were still in their first positions. Next most likely to leave are elementary teachers, with intermediate more likely than primary teachers to remain in their first jobs. Among secondary teachers, the most likely to leave are those who teach at both the junior and senior high levels. Senior high teachers are most likely to stay, with a departure rate in the first year of 17 percent.

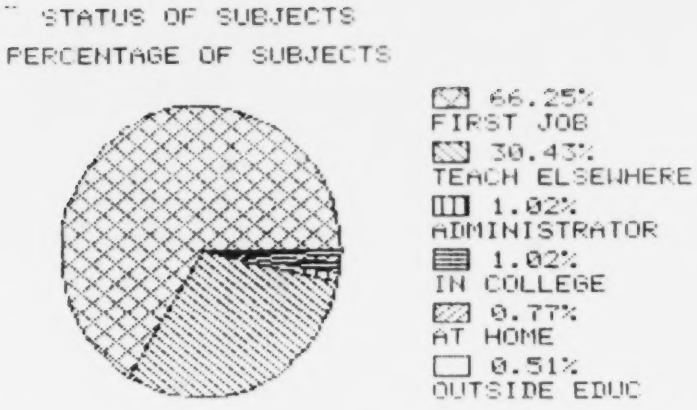
Conclusions

The paragraphs that follow report patterns we observed as we examined data reported by our informants. In most cases, patterns observed were not statistically significant and should be interpreted merely as trends.

1. A majority of North Dakota teachers who leave their first jobs accept teaching positions elsewhere, usually in larger communities. Ninety percent of the 132 teachers in our sample who had left their first positions were teaching in a different location when surveyed. Almost 4 percent (5 individuals) had moved into school administration. Of the remaining 6 percent (8 individuals), 3 were in college, 3 were at home with children, and only 2 viewed themselves as employed outside of education. Figure 7 shows the current situations of the respondent sample.

Comparing Figure 6 to Figures 1 and 2, which describe a sample of 50 nonrespondents, suggests that 90 percent is an overestimate of the number of

Figure 7



persons teaching elsewhere. Only 28 percent of the departed teachers in this sample are known to be teaching elsewhere, but an additional 66 percent might be teaching elsewhere based on what we know about them; i.e. teachers who moved elsewhere to be with a spouse, had problems teaching, were riffed, or whose whereabouts are unknown might be teaching elsewhere. Assuming that only half of these are still teaching would mean that 61 percent of the nonrespondent sample is teaching elsewhere compared to 90 percent of the respondent sample. Assuming that the nonrespondent sample describes the entire nonrespondent population leads to the estimate that at least 70 percent of North Dakota teachers who left their first positions accepted other teaching positions.

Turning again to our 391 teacher informants, we learned that of the 132 who had left their first positions, 17 percent moved to be with a spouse either in a new marriage or because they had to live apart during the first job. Another 12 percent were terminated because of school closings or reductions in force. In some of these cases, the teacher had accepted a

position known to be available for only one year. A majority of those who moved, however, (69%), viewed the desire to teach elsewhere as the major reason for leaving. In follow-up interviews, we learned that a few of these teachers had moved to new positions in the same district, but most had moved to new locations.

Reasons for moves to new positions included desire to be in a larger community; opportunity to teach in the major or at a preferred grade level or to do more or less coaching; disagreement with the perspective or values of the beginning school; higher pay or better fringe benefits in the new job; desire to be nearer a university; transfer of a spouse; and concern about job security in a district with declining enrollment. Reasons teachers gave for staying in their first jobs may also be of interest. Those given most frequently in response to an open-ended question were, in descending order of frequency, that teachers liked their colleagues and students, liked the community, loved teaching, and felt that good teaching jobs were hard to come by.

Principal reports of reasons for new teacher departures gives a slightly different picture. Principals reported moving elsewhere to accept a positions as the primary reason for teacher departures (37%), followed by moves to be with a spouse (15%). Principals felt that the heavy demands of teaching, low salaries, lack of interest in teaching, and low evaluations from administrators were important factors in the decisions of some teachers to leave, each accounting for 8 to 9 percent of resignations. Reductions in force and lack of support for new teachers were also reported by the principals as accounting for departures. Overall, the principal reports confirm the impression that our sample represents the more dedicated teachers.

2. Teachers who begin their careers in small communities are more likely to leave. Our data showed that 80 percent of the teachers who started their careers in communities over 25,000 stayed compared to a 61 percent rate for communities of fewer than 1,000. This trend was directly related to community size and was statistically significant. Of the 41 new teachers who told us they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their first teaching positions, 56 percent began their careers in communities under 1,000, and 75 percent began their careers in communities under 3,000.

3. Teachers beginning their careers in the northwestern part of the state are especially vulnerable to attrition. Examining the state by quadrants showed the rate of new teacher departure here was 32 percent compared to 20-23 percent in the other three quadrants. Of the 41 individuals who told us they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their first teaching positions, 37 percent had taught in the northwest. Of course, this trend is related to the community size trend noted above. Comments from teachers we interviewed suggested that geographic isolation, low salaries, and school closings or reductions in force were also factors contributing to dissatisfaction with teaching positions in the northwest quadrant.

4. Teachers new to the communities of their first jobs are more likely to leave. Of the 392 teachers in our sample, 33 percent had previously lived in the communities of their first teaching positions. Seventy-eight percent of these residents remained in their first positions compared to 61 percent of the teachers who were new to the community.

5. Specialists are very likely to leave their first positions. The 87 specialists in our sample included 47 special educators, 16 kindergarten teachers, 10 music teachers, 11 media specialists, and 3 counselors. As

mentioned earlier, only 40% of this group remained in their first positions at the time of the survey Why the high attrition of specialists? Huling-Austin (1988) lists among the most trying of teaching conditions working with large classes, working with a large number of exceptional students, and, most difficult of all, teaching in more than one classroom. Several of these constitute normal working conditions for the specialists in question. Music teachers meet large groups of students. Some special educators work only with exceptional students. People in these roles in many North Dakota schools teach in several classrooms or several schools. In our sample of new teachers, 28 had worked in more than one building each day, and 75 had worked in more than one classroom each day during their first year. Specialists in the fields mentioned accounted for about half of this group of itinerant teachers; the others were secondary teachers of subjects which tend to be elective.

6. Teachers who are not certified for some portion of their first job are very likely to leave. Our sample included 57 individuals who said they were not certified for some portion of their first teaching positions, and 45 percent of this group left those positions. Individuals who said they were not certified included 10 special educators certified to work with the mentally handicapped who were teaching learning disabled children on a provisional basis; 17 secondary teachers whose main assignment was presumably in the area of certification but who were also responsible for another area--often computers, psychology, or driver education--in which certification was not held; 5 kindergarten teachers not endorsed for kindergarten; 5 Chapter 1 or basic skills teachers not endorsed in reading; 6 K-12 physical education teachers whose certification was apparently only for secondary; and 5 elementary teachers teaching physical education. From

the viewpoint of the state, this data may overestimate of the number of noncertified new teachers. North Dakota does issue provisional certification in some of the cases listed above; there are no program approval guidelines for teachers of computer studies; and elementary certification does qualify a person to teach physical education to the self-contained class. However, the new teacher perspective on this question should also be noted: teachers are more likely to leave if they are not or believe they are not qualified for their positions.

7. Teachers who report being dissatisfied do not necessarily leave their positions. Expecting a respectable correlation between self-reported level of teacher satisfaction with the first position and the decision to stay or leave, we were surprised to find that while there was some positive relationship for secondary teachers (0.22 using Spearman's rho) and for specialists (0.17), the correlation between satisfaction and staying was negative for elementary teachers. In our examination of sources of dissatisfaction, a profile of the most frustrated beginning secondary teacher emerges as a person likely to be single or newly married and either new to the community or living outside of the community of the school who teaches at both the junior and senior high levels, or for some other reason teaches more than five different courses, and has more than three extra duty assignments. For specialists, a profile of dissatisfaction suggests a person whose assignment involves a large number of preparations each day for work in several classrooms or buildings and living either alone or in a home with small children away from the community of the school or as a newcomer to the school community. No such pattern emerges for elementary teachers. One explanation may be that there are more uniform expectations for an elementary assignment: many preparations for a self-contained class of

students in one location.

While focusing on sources of dissatisfaction can be instructive, implications of the flawed relationship of satisfaction to attrition are important, too. In North Dakota many teachers who claim to be very satisfied with their first positions leave them anyway. This is especially true of elementary teachers; 44 percent of those who were "very satisfied" with their first-year positions left anyway. Equally alarmingly, while teachers who are "very dissatisfied" with their first teaching positions usually leave, those who are only "moderately dissatisfied" are as likely to stay as to go.

8. Teachers who leave their first jobs are likely to be among the more effective teachers. Because our survey of principals did not ask about the teaching success or effectiveness of new teachers, this conclusion is not as strongly corroborated as it might be. Data collected from beginning teachers, however, suggest that the effectiveness of the ones who departed has a bimodal character, i.e. teachers who left were among the best and worst of the new teachers. A comparatively high incidence of teaching failure among departed teachers is suggested by responses to a question about frequency of formal evaluation. Among the new teachers who left their first positions, 8.3 percent reported having been evaluated more than three times in the first year compared to 1.7 percent of the new teachers who stayed. We interpret frequent formal evaluation as a sign that the teacher was having considerable difficulty.

On the other hand, comparing self-reports of strengths and weaknesses of teachers who remained in their first positions to those who left shows differences that seem to favor the departed group. Teachers who left were more likely to cite as teaching strengths their background from a good

student teaching experience and discipline and classroom management. These both suggest competence, the latter in an area most frequently cited as a weakness by beginning teachers and their principals. Teachers who left their first positions were more likely to cite as weaknesses lack of specific record-keeping skills or lack of knowledge of the content of a particular subject area and less likely to cite as weaknesses planning, time management, and organization or rapport with students. The areas of weakness here are specific and therefore easily related to remedial action. The areas of weakness less frequently cited by the teachers who left reinforce the impression of their competence compared to teachers in general. The fact that a majority of teachers who left their first positions were successful in finding other positions reinforces our impression that they were successful beginning teachers.

9. Teachers who stayed tended to receive more appropriate staff development in the first year than those who departed. Self-reports of staff development experienced during the first year of teaching show that the teachers who stayed were more likely to work in school districts that 1). were members of one of North Dakota's ten teacher centers, 2). offered tuition support for enrollment in college courses, 3). provided professional leave for attendance at meetings, and 4). reimbursed employees for travel to professional meetings. Teachers who stayed were more likely than those who left to use a teacher center and to have "very good" relationships with colleagues, who had offered significantly more instructional help and opportunities to observe to teachers who stayed. Interestingly enough, teachers who stayed received from colleagues no more help in securing resources nor more advice about discipline and classroom management than those who left. Ninety percent of teachers who stayed and eighty-four

percent of those who left said that their strongest support in the first year came from teacher colleagues. Seventy percent of teachers in both groups said they would have been more effective in the first year if a resource or support teacher had been designated to assist them.

How much support do new teachers in North Dakota actually receive? Two-thirds of our new teacher subjects reported that they experienced some incentive for professional development in the first year. This statistic is generally supported by principal data, which reveals that the type of support provided tends to vary by the size of the school. Table 2 lists in decreasing order of frequency the kinds of support principals said were offered to new teachers in North Dakota. Columns show the frequency with which each kind of support was reported by principals in schools in four size categories.

TABLE 2
PERCENTAGE OF PRINCIPALS REPORTING TYPES OF SUPPORT
OFFERED TO NEW TEACHERS BY SIZE OF SCHOOL

SUPPORT	Number of Teachers in School 1-6	7-11	12-19	20+
Building orientation	43	58	67	85
District orientation	39	46	68	81
Administrative support	41	51	59	50
Colleaguial support	40	39	34	37
Special inservice for new teachers	24	32	33	50
Designated helping teacher	4	7	17	29
Limited class size	5	5	13	8
Team teaching	6	5	11	6
Reduced load	7	4	9	7
Release time for observation	1	1	2	3

As can be seen from Table 2, larger schools are more likely to provide formally organized programs of staff development for new teachers, and small schools are more likely to depend on generalized colleaguial support. Size of the district in which the school is located is undoubtedly a factor,

also, as is the extent to which the principal sees support of new teachers as his or her responsibility. Our data suggest that schools which have 7 to 19 teachers in which the principal is assigned to teach 50% or more of the time are least likely to act in support of new teachers.

Recommendations for North Dakota Schools

Our analysis of the data provided by North Dakota principals and teachers leads to a number of recommendations both for people who work in school districts and for the wider professional community, including colleges and universities which prepare teachers. These are listed below.

1. Staff development experiences which orient new teachers to the local situation should be offered in every school, even if for only one part-time teacher. Whether orientation occurs through a meeting, designation of a support teacher, or a handbook augmented by discussion, it is critical to the ability of a newcomer to cope. Because local procedures and expectations are often a problem for new teachers, these should be made explicit. Local procedures typically evolve in response to factors that the new teacher will not understand at first and which could not have been anticipated in his or her teacher preparation program.

2. A climate of on-going, school-based support for teacher growth is important in encouraging newcomers to stay. Membership in a teacher center, tuition support for college coursework, professional leave, and professional travel reimbursement are evidences that such a climate exists, but these benefits focus attention away from the school. Site-based support is also important and must engage the new teacher in learning about teaching that goes beyond superficial advice. Classroom observation, team teaching, peer coaching, child study, and school seminars provide such opportunities for learning with immediate colleagues.

3. New teachers must not be asked to accept loads heavier than is typical in the district. Class size, number of problem students, number of extra duties, schedule configuration, and number of buildings or classrooms taught in are all factors in whether the new teacher can survive. The principal needs to think through the conditions under which the new teacher is being asked to work and find ways to assure that it is fair and manageable.

4. New teachers must not teach in areas for which they are not certified. In general, it seems better that a school not offer an elective course than that a new teacher be asked to teach a subject for which she or he is unprepared. If exceptions to certification must be sought to provide required services, the teacher involved should be given special support to fulfill the assignment. Assigning a teacher to teach outside of his or her areas of preparation is the best way to assure a search for another new teacher the following year.

5. The school needs to secure the assistance of the community in welcoming a newcomer. In a community that is declining in size, housing is often a problem, but a community that wants to keep its school open must find local housing for its teachers. Finding good neighbors is an important factor in anyone's happiness with a new location. The school board and parent groups are good places for school people to begin to explore this area with supportive community members.

6. Because of the difficult situation of the specialist teacher, persons in such positions need to be identified with "home base" schools which will assume the responsibilities suggested above for them. This practice will have many long-term benefits for the home base school as well

as for the new specialist.

7. Because of the importance to North Dakota educators of networking across schools with teachers of the same grades and subjects, new teachers need assistance in finding appropriate networks. The resources of the teacher centers, of the nearest college or university, of teachers of the same grade or subject in neighboring districts, and of professional organizations should be introduced according to their potential for supporting the new teacher. Colleges and universities, teacher centers, and state professional groups must assist, on their end, by attending to new teachers, and, in some cases, by programming especially focused on new teachers.

8. Teacher preparation needs to attend to areas of concern to new teachers and their principals. While many of the challenges encountered on the first teaching job are context-specific, principles of classroom management and discipline, student evaluation practices, and organization and planning of a curriculum need to be part of every teacher education program, whether elementary or secondary. Student teaching needs to be long enough to enable the intending teacher to reflect on how the principles learned are applied in that situation.

9. Teacher induction must be assisted by college and university-based teacher educators. Teacher education programs have a moral responsibility, reinforced by accreditation standards, to follow their graduates into the first years of teaching. North Dakota colleges and universities need to develop, fund, and pilot effective programs of teacher support. Such programs might include mentor teacher development, a year-long internship as

part of a five-year program, telecommunication delivered coursework for new teachers, newsletter networks, and development of capacity within teacher centers and local districts.

10. Principal preparation needs to include attention to the particular needs of new teachers and to means of creating school climates in which beginning teachers can survive and thrive. Principals must be able to empower teachers at various stages of their career development and to assist school staff in finding direction for growth and development. These agendas ought to be a major focus within a program of administrator preparation.

11. The time commitment of principals to building leadership and staff development must be sufficient to assist new teachers. This is not possible when the principal is a full-time teacher, as well. We support the elimination of the full-time teaching principalship (Lee, 1987).

12. The entire professional community in North Dakota needs to commit itself to the understanding that learning to teach is a career-long endeavor by making staff development a legislative priority. All but a few of the recommendations listed above have a cost, ranging from a few hours of principal time to hundreds of staff hours spent in intensive study of teaching appropriate to a local situation. We recommend a staff development funding package to include matching funds available to local school districts through the Department of Public Instruction and funding for teacher and administrator induction programs available to colleges and universities through the Board of Higher Education.

Summary and Conclusion

This study of the attrition of new teachers in North Dakota indicated a that 22.4 percent of North Dakota teachers leave their positions during or

after the first year, a statistic higher than the national average of 15 percent. Teacher characteristics associated with high attrition included not being certified for a portion of the teaching assignment, being a specialist teacher, working in a smaller community, working in northwestern North Dakota, and residing in a new community. The analysis indicated that teachers who left their first positions were not necessarily the least satisfied teachers, especially at the elementary level. Furthermore, while the departed teachers did include a group of persons who were not successful in the first year of teaching, a larger group of them were among the more effective beginning teachers. We estimate that 70 percent of teachers who leave their first positions in North Dakota after one year immediately accept teaching positions in other places, often in larger communities. Teachers who remained in their first positions tended to receive more appropriate staff development than those who left.

Examination of the situation of new teachers in North Dakota demonstrates both the need for support of new teachers and the need for support of the learning climates in schools that receive new teachers. Recommendations for reducing the current high rate of beginning rural teacher attrition include building level orientation, fair assignment practices that recognize certification, provision of local housing, "home base" schools for specialists, teacher preparation that addresses areas commonly troublesome in the first year, outreach to new teachers on the part of professional networks, and principal assignments which provide adequate time to address staff development needs. Staff development, both for new teachers and for the faculties of which they are a part, is a critical element for teacher retention in rural schools.

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APPENDIX A

FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING STUDY

This survey is being conducted under guidelines established by the University of North Dakota. By cooperating, you will help the survey administrators find answers to important questions; however, your participation is strictly voluntary. You should omit any questions which you feel unduly invade your privacy or which are otherwise offensive to you. Confidentiality is guaranteed; your name will not be associated with your answers in any public or private report of the results.

1. Including the current year, how many years have you taught full-time in the public schools?
   _____years

2. What was your age when you began your first year of teaching?
   _____years

3. Are you male or female?
   _____male _____female

4. What was the size of community in which you were reared?
   _____1 - 999
   _____1000 - 2999
   _____3000 - 9999
   _____10,000 - 24,999
   _____25,000 - 99,999
   _____over 100,000

5. What is your ethnic background?
   _____Caucasian
   _____Black
   _____Hispanic
   _____Native American
   _____Asian (Oriential, subcontinent Indian, Pacific Islanders)

6. What was the size of the community of your first teaching position?
   _____1 -999
   _____1000 - 2999
   _____3000 - 9999
   _____10,000 - 24,999
   _____25,000 - 99,999
   _____over 100,000

7. If you taught on an Indian reservation, check the type of school where you taught your first year.
   _____I did not teach on an Indian reservation.
   _____cooperative (public and Bureau of Indian Affairs)
   _____Tribal School (638 contract)
   _____total Bureau of Indian Affairs
   _____boarding school
   _____public school

8. What quadrant of North Dakota did you teach in your first year of teaching?
   _____NE _____NW _____SE _____SW

9. What grade level(s) were you assigned to teach during your first year of teaching?
   _____

IF YOU ARE AN ELEMENTARY TEACHER, ANSWER QUESTION 10 AND OMIT QUESTIONS 11 AND 12.

IF YOU ARE A SECONDARY TEACHER, ANSWER QUESTION 11 AND OMIT QUESTIONS 10 AND 12.

IF YOU ARE A COUNSELOR, SPECIAL EDUCATION, KINDERGARTEN, ART, MUSIC OR PHYSICAL EDUCATION SPECIALIST, ANSWER QUESTION 12 AND OMIT QUESTIONS 10 AND 11.

10. If you were an elementary teacher in your first year, please check all the subjects you were responsible to teach:

_____reading _____math _____science _____English _____spelling
_____social studies _____art _____music _____physical education
_____health _____handwriting
_____other (please list) _____

11. If you were a secondary teacher in your first year, please check all the subjects you taught and circle the one which was your major teaching assignment.

_____English
_____literature
_____drama
_____speech
_____history
_____government
_____civics
_____social studies
_____home ec.
_____vo. ag.
_____foreign language
_____business
_____vocal music
_____psychology
_____others (please list)

_____chemistry
_____physics
_____biology
_____life science
_____earth science
_____general science
_____calculus
_____algebra
_____geometry
_____general math
_____computers
_____driver's ed
_____band
_____sociology

If you were a secondary teacher, please answer the following:

_____number of classes taught
_____number of different preparations

12. If you were a specialist teacher in your first year, please check the area that best describes your first year position.
_____special education (remedial)
_____special education (gifted)
_____art specialist
_____physical education specialist
_____music specialist
_____kindergarten
_____media specialist
_____counselor

13. Were you assigned a teaching area for which you were not professionally certified?
_____yes _____no

14. Which of the following extra duties were you assigned in your first year of teaching?

_____lunchroom duty _____bus duty
_____study hall duty _____playground/recess duty
_____hall duty _____coaching
_____organizational advisor/supervisor
_____selling tickets/working sporting events
_____other (please list)

15. If you were an itinerant teacher, how many different buildings did you teach in per day?

_____I was not an itinerant teacher.
_____number of buildings served

16. If you were a traveling teacher within a building, how many different classrooms did you teach in per day?

_____I was not a traveling teacher.
_____number of different classrooms used

17. What was your average class size during your first year of teaching?

_____average number of students

18. How many exceptional children (gifted and remedial) did you have in your first year of teaching?

_____students

19. What was the ethnic background of the majority of your students?

_____Caucasian
_____Black
_____Hispanic
_____Native American
_____Asian (Oriental, subcontinent Indian, Pacific Islander)
_____mixed

20. What was the average economic level of the students in the school in which you taught?

_____poor _____middle class ____well to do _____mixed

21. Who was your immediate supervisor in your first year of teaching?

_____principal
_____superintendent
_____county superintendent
_____curriculum/grade area director
_____other (please specify)

22. What kind of working relationship did you have with your supervisor? Cirle one of the choices below.

1	2	3	4	5
very poor	poor	average	good	very good

23. How many times in your first year of teaching were you formally evaluated?

_____times

24. When you were evaluated, did you have stated objectives that were to be evaluted?

_____yes _____no

25. Did you view your evaluations as an aid to improve or as just an evaluative tool?
_____aid to improve _____evaluative tool

26. How supportive was your principal in your first year of teaching? Please circle one of the choices.

1	2	3	4	5
unsupportive		medium support		very supportive

27. What kind of relationship did you have with your immediate colleagues?

1	2	3	4	5
very poor	poor	average	good	very good

28. List the kinds of encouragement and incentives you received from your employer for professional development.
_____I did not receive any.
I received the following:
_____district membership in the teacher centers
_____tuition support for college coursework
_____extra duty pay for curriculum or committee work
_____professional leave for attendance at meetings
_____travel to professional meetings reimbursed

29. Did you use the teacher centers in North Dakota to assist you in teaching your first year?
_____yes ____no

30. Did you live in the community in which you taught before you accepted your first teaching position there?
_____yes _____no

31. Did you live alone your first year of teaching?
_____yes _____no

32. Were you newly married your first year of teaching?
_____yes _____no

33. Were you recently divorced your first year of teaching?
_____yes _____no

34. Did you have young children your first year of teaching?
_____yes _____no

35. As a beginning teacher, what kind of support did you receive from other teachers and administrators? Please check all that apply.

_____information about the system and its policys
_____information about available materials and resources
_____instructional information and help
_____emotional support (empathetic listening and sharing)
_____support in classroom management and behavior
_____observation of model teachers

36. What did you see as your greatest strength as a beginning teacher?

37. What area do you think you could have most improved in as a beginning teacher?

38. How would you rate your level of satisfaction with your first teaching positon?

1	2	3	4	5
not satisfied		moderately satisfied		very satisfied

39. Do you feel you could have been more successful if you had been assigned to a teacher with a similar teaching assignment to use as a resource and support person?
_____yes _____no

40. If you were assigned a close, personal support person on staff, who would it have been?
_____principal _____fellow teacher
_____other (please specify)

41. Did you feel that your college preparation was adequate to meet the needs of your first year of teaching?
_____yes _____no

42. If you have stayed with your first teaching position, what is the main reason for your staying?

43. If you have left your first teaching position, what are you doing now?
_____I am teaching in a different location.
_____I am going back to college.
_____I am working in the home.
_____I have a job outside of education.
_____other

44. If you have left your first teaching position, what would you give as the reason(s)? Check all that apply.
_____found a better job outside of teaching
_____reduction in force
_____only hired as a one year position
_____moved to another teaching position
_____lack of support from the system
_____no voice in what was being taught
_____too demanding (too many preparations, responsibilities)
_____went back to college
_____got married and moved to location for spouse's job
_____maternity
_____other (please specify)

45. If you are still teaching, how long do you plan to stay in teaching?

_____years

46. At what institution did you receive your teacher preparation?

47. What is your highest degree earned?

If you have any other information that would help us to see more realistically your first year of teaching, please include it on the back of this sheet. Your response to this questionnaire will be kept in complete confidence. We would like to contact and interview several of the respondents by telephone. If you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview, please provide the necessary information below.

_____
last name first middle

_____
address

_____
city state zip

(___)_____(____)_____
home telephone work telephone

Please return this questionnaire in the envelope provided.

Thank you for your time and help.

FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING STUDY

APPENDIX B

This survey is being conducted under guidelines established by the University of North Dakota. By cooperating, you will help the survey administrators find answers to important questions; however, your participation is strictly voluntary. You should omit any questions which you feel unduly invade your privacy or which are otherwise offensive to you. Confidentiality is guaranteed; your name will not be associated with your answers in any public or private report of the results.

1. At what level are you a principal?
   _____K - 6
   _____K - 8
   _____9 - 12
   _____other (please list)

2. How many FTE teachers are in your school building?
   _____teachers

3. Are you a teaching principal?
   _____yes _____no

4. If you are a teaching principal, what percentage of the day do you spend teaching?
   _____% of the day spent teaching

5. How many teachers who have never taught before did you enploy for the 1987-88 school year? the previous year? the year before?

   _____teachers for 87 - 88
   _____teachers for 86 - 87
   _____teachers for 85 - 86

6. From the number of teachers listed in question five, how many first year teachers from your building stayed for at least one more year?

   _____teachers stayed from 87 - 88
   _____teachers stayed from 86 - 87
   _____teachers stayed from 85 - 86

7. What are some of the reasons for teachers' leaving after their first year? Check all that apply.

   _____found a better job
   _____low evaluations by administrators
   _____found it was too demanding
   _____found it was not in their interest to teach
   _____moved to another state or area to teach
   _____did not receive enough support from the system
   _____stated that salary was too low
   _____reduction in force
   _____got married and moved to location for spouse's job
   _____maternity
   _____others (please specify)

8. What does your district do specifically to help support first year teachers?

_____conduct district orientation for new teachers
_____designate support or helping teachers
_____sponsor special inservice for beginning teachers
_____conduct building orientation for new teachers
_____reduce loads for beginning teachers
_____limit class size for beginning teachers
_____team teaching
_____spouse orientation
_____other (please list)

9. What types of support are offered in your building to help first year teachers?

10. What would you see as general strengths of first year teachers?

11. What would you see as general weaknesses of first year teachers?

If you have other information that would help us to see more realistically a teacher's first year, please include it on the back of this sheet. Your responses to this questionnaire will be kept in complete confidence. We would like to contact and interview several of the respondants by telephone. If you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview, please give the following information below.

_____
last name first middle

_____
address

_____
city state zip

(_____)_____ (____)_____
home telephone work telephone

Please return this questionnaire in the envelope provided.

Thank you for your time and help.

END

U.S. Dept. of Education

Office of Education
Research and
Improvement (OERI)

ERIC

Date Filmed

March 29, 1991